



THROSSEL HOLE
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Throssel Hole Priory Journal

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Retreat Dates

Weekend Retreats:

1977	
January	8 - 9 22 - 23
February	5 - 6 19 - 20
March	5 - 6
April	9 - 10 23 - 24
May	7 - 8 21 - 22

Week Retreats:

1976		1977	
December	17 - 23	March	21 - 27
		June	7 - 13

visitors: Weekend retreats are both introductory and also open to those who have had previous experience with our training and practice here. Week retreats are open only to those who have previously visited the priory. Please write for an application form. Guests should send a cheque in advance with their application form for retreats, and those staying for extended periods of time must pay in advance every month. No cash refunds will be given unless the application is rejected or the retreat is booked up. Any balance may be applied to future retreats, visits, publications, benches or other Priory sales.

<u>Costs:</u>	Daily	£2.50	Monthly	£35.00
	1 week	£15.00	Weekend Retreat	£8.00
	2 weeks	£25.00	Week Retreat	£20.00
	3 weeks	£30.00		

The Act of Will

One of the most common problems arising out of training is that we learn to know what is right for us to do and then continue to do those very things which we know cause us to suffer.

How do we learn to stop? Initially we have to see that we do these things deliberately. No one does them to us. We are responsible. Our situations, our problems, our discomforts, our disagreeable pleasures, our conflicts, are simply created by our own selfishness. Our usual reaction to this knowledge is to argue, deny responsibility and then feel guilty, awful and miserable. This doesn't help.

If you want to learn from your suffering you have to be completely open. Our "failures" are those things that we have not been able to learn from because we have closed ourselves off. Our "successes" are those situations where we have not been able to see that we could have done better. We cling to our ideas that

we can succeed or fail. If you want to stop making yourself miserable then you have to let go of your idea about success or failure and learn to accept the situation just as it is. Our first responsibility is to not attempt to manipulate the external situation to make it conform to our ideas about the way the world should operate. We have to change our selves.

So often we think that we want to help someone we love because they are making their lives miserable. First, accept the fact that you do the very same thing, and if it doesn't take the exact same form, it isn't because you are not capable of doing the same thing. See that you are not separate or apart from any form of suffering. Accept that you cannot stop someone else from making themselves miserable and no one else can make you suffer. Others may be able to cause physical damage or even kill the body, but no one can force you to suffer, i.e. to be anxious, fearful, greedy, hateful or deluded.

The reason that we continue to do those things which we know are not right for us is that we are simply unwilling to change. It is very nice to think that we know what we should or should not do, and it is very nice to read about spiritual practices in books, it is fun simply to play with the ideals, but we only start training when we put those ideals into practice. If we really saw what we had to do we would do it. You understand as much about training as you put into practice. If you see that there is something that you have to do, you will understand that only when you do it. The understanding that you have when you see and you don't do is intellectual understanding. The religious understanding comes when you act on the knowledge that you already have.

We can only see ourselves as we really are when we sit completely still. We are not our thoughts, we are not our senses, we are not our situation or the other people we know, and we are not separate or apart

from them. If we sit very still, we will see just what we are doing to ourselves. If we sit very still we will see that the mind is naturally positive and bright. It does not judge nor does it feel guilty. It does not puff up our egos or blow up our emotions; the mind is simply a reflection of ourselves. When we truly sit still in meditation we will see the solution to our imagined problems, and the method of meditation is that solution. If we don't like being depressed and negative we have to stop creating the negativity and depression, which we do by allowing the mind to be naturally bright and positive. This is real courage, not our imagined idea of what strength and courage are. This is the act of will that we have to be willing to make if we are to truly practise our meditation. If we allow the mind to be naturally bright and positive, we will not pretend. This is not a forced positivity or brightness as a result of thinking that we have to be that way, but simply the natural act of sitting still, whether that sitting still is in the midst of physical work, ordinary daily activities, or sitting in a meditation hall. If we think that we are only the problem and not the solution, then we are unwilling to see more than half of the Buddha. We look at the Buddha's backside and say what an ass he is. Look at what the Buddha does. The Buddha made his life an example of how you live by the precepts. Most people want enlightenment and their selfishness too. If you want to have enlightenment you have to behave like a Buddha. If you meditate you run the risk of seeing what you can do to make yourself better, and if you are not willing to act on that knowledge, thinking that you can stop meditation or that you can do the meditation and not put into practice what you learn, you simply compound your delusion with stupidity and foolishness. If you see what you can do and make an effort to change, you will free yourself. If you see what you can do and don't make an effort to change, you will simply intensify your own discomfort.

First we make the resolve in our own minds to try to see what we are doing. Then see that we can sit still in the midst of our difficulties and face them with the real courage of a bright positive mind. This is faith. Once we accept the problem with a bright positive mind the solution arises, for it is our willingness to sit still and allow the mind itself to be bright and our actions flow out of this which is the solution. Now both you and I have to do this, not just talk or read about it.

Jisho Perry.

Commitment

It is easy to commit ourselves to training when things seem to be going well. But there are times when everything seems to be going wrong, when we've forgotten our old reasons for training and can't find any new ones, when all our faith seems to have evaporated, when we don't seem to understand anything, and the whole world seems to be falling apart and plunging us into total darkness. At times like this commitment seems impossible; there seems to be no reason to train, no reason to do anything at all.

However, it is at times like this that we can find the real commitment. This comes from the heart; it is probably what brought us to Zen in the first place; it has nothing to do with what we think are our reasons for training, it is not some idea. When we no longer believe, but still go on, that is faith. When we see no reason for what we're doing, but still do it, that is commitment. It is not something we have to decide to do, not something we work out in our head; training is itself the commitment, when we actually do it. I don't know why I get up in the morning when it's dark and cold. I don't know why I sit and look at a wall or work out in the cold or

read scriptures I don't understand. Once I thought I knew the reason for doing these things, now there doesn't seem to be any reason but I still do them because they seem to be the right thing for me to do. I've tried to stop training and known that I would be thoroughly miserable if I did, for if we meditate our hearts start to tell us what we should do, and if we refuse to listen or argue or ignore what our hearts have to tell us there is no peace anywhere, there is usually complete chaos. We cause our own suffering when we refuse to do what we know to be best for us. The commitment to training is not to anything external, it is simply to our own hearts, really just to living our own lives fully. After all, however bad things may be, at the end of the day we're still here, we made it through the day. And we'll probably make it through tomorrow, so we may as well do it wholeheartedly. Perhaps things could be better, perhaps there is a light at the end of the long dark tunnel; the only way to find out is to go on, to do the very best we can. We don't need to understand anything, simply to sit still and trust that our hearts will lead us in the right direction, that the Buddhas and Patriarchs and Zen masters weren't all telling lies, that there is something to do and that we can do it. After all, what do we have to lose?

Jimyo Krasner.

The Karma of Not Training

"There are three periods into which the karmic consequences of good and evil fall; one is the consequence experienced in this present world, the second is consequence experienced in the next world and the third consequence experienced in the world after the next one." *

* "Zen is Eternal Life" by Rōshi Jiyu Kennett; p. 155, Shōbōgenzō: Shushōgi, by Dogen.

Karma has mysterious ways of catching up with us if we are not open to what we are doing. We may find ourselves quite surprised by the results, and they often seem totally divorced from anything we might have done. It's easy enough to see that if we punch someone on the nose we're likely to get arrested or punched back; it's equally easy to see that if we're rude to someone they won't be particularly enamoured of us. This is karma experienced in the present world and in the next world, and on a very superficial level. Karma works on much more subtle levels than only these and has far more far-reaching effects. Unfortunately, also, the effects of bad karma extend to all other beings as well as to ourselves. This realization, of the way in which our actions can affect others, can be one of the most daunting that there is, and often leads to quiet despair and fatalistic resignation. If taken positively, however, it can be, and often is, the reason for us to decide to do something about ourselves.

We may then think that we're free at last. "I've taken the plunge; I've made a commitment to train; I've turned over a new leaf; now I can take it easy." And we wonder why we feel dreadful, and why things still don't seem to be going right. This is where karma reveals one of its levels with a vengeance. It's not enough to cease from evil. We have to do good as well. "Whaaaaat!? Come on, do me a favour! Haven't I done enough!?" Actually, we haven't. If we don't actively train to the very best of our ability, then we are doing evil, and breaking all the precepts. This becomes more pressing in direct ratio to the amount of training we have done. The more we see what needs to be done, the harder it becomes to ignore it, and the more painful are the consequences of doing so. It's no longer possible to be a passive observer; we have to get in there and clean up the mess, and we also become very aware of our responsibilities toward others.

We are not only responsible to ensure that our actions are carried out with due regard to their possible effect on others; we are also responsible to see that others may learn by our example. Any failure on our part to be fully aware of our actions constitutes an evil act. In this way we are responsible for the actions of both ourselves and others, and we are also responsible for the karma caused by them.

This responsibility is one of the hardest of all to accept. As monks here we are often berated for our omissions. Sometimes it's difficult even to see exactly what those omissions might have been. It's only when we're told that we haven't been training to the best of our ability that we think, "Oh that! Well, that's only a little thing; and besides, it's nobody's business but mine." Well, in fact it's everybody's business. We just cannot afford to let ourselves be dull, or vacant, or miserable or irritable, or to indulge any of the negative emotions. It's absolutely imperative that we don't sell the wine of delusion thereby, and that by our example we become enlightenment itself. This is the responsibility implied in deciding to train; once that decision is taken (or actually, even if it isn't), there is no way that we can avoid it. Conversely, we should bear in mind that the law of karma applies to good as well as bad karma. "Once aroused, true conviction changes all beings in addition to us, with benefits extending to everything including that which is animate and inanimate." *

Kozan Ball.

* "Zen is Eternal Life" by Rōshi Jiyu Kennett; p. 156, Shōbōgenzō: Shushōgi, by Dogen.

Opinion of Pride

Training presents us with what we are, as we live out our lives. We are constantly confronted with the reality of ourselves, which we usually ignore so completely that when we do take a look - usually only when it can't be ignored - we express astonishment; though often we realize that all along we in fact knew what we were doing but had simply turned away, preferring to stay with our opinions of what is right and what is not. We use the opinions as a barrier to what is real. If we wish to train it is important to distinguish between what we do and how we think of ourselves, how we think we live. When we have opinions about how we should live, then all we see is our opinions, not what we actually do.

Often our opinions spring from a feeling of inadequacy; we think that we need to sit in judgment on ourselves according to the standard of our opinions.

If we allow pride to enter into our practice we cut ourselves off from the real world and live apart in our own imaginings of how we are - a rather stupid thing to do, as our image of ourselves usually looks rather silly when confronted with openness, and we get all embarrassed when our self-importance is revealed. Often we create the image because we doubt ourselves. Keizan's comment in the Kyojūkaimon on the precept, "Do not be proud of yourself and devalue others" is, "Every Buddha and every Ancestor realizes that he is the same as the limitless sky and as great as the universe." For some time this seemed to me a strange comment on the precept about being proud. However, if we look below the surface of pride we find it stems from a feeling of inadequacy. Keizan points out that there is no need for pride: we are perfectly adequate just being ourselves. He goes on in his commentary, "When they realize their true body

there is nothing within or without; when they realize their true body they are nowhere upon the earth." We are perfectly adequate but we can do evil. If we see our adequacy we see also that there is no difference between ourselves and anything else; that the whole universe, including the irritating people who show us our pride, is all perfectly adequate as it is.

When we simply accept ourselves along with all our pride, opinions, good things and bad and get on with our training, there is no worry about adequacy and inadequacy or what is within and what is without. Dogen says in Uji,* "When it is adequate it is unfinished; when it is inadequate it is already completed." When we get on and actually drop our opinions and are still enough to listen to the direction of our hearts, seeing where we need to do more, constantly opening up to our mistakes and making good use of them; when our training is incomplete and we are going on, then we are adequate. But when pride enters in and we get complacent and satisfied with ourselves - i.e. when we act as though our training was completed - then we are a pain to others and ourselves.

Daishin Morgan.

* "Zen is Eternal Life" by Rōshi Jiyu Kennett; p. 170, Shōbōgenzō: Uji, by Dogen.

Misery Loves Company

To be miserable or anxious is to be selfish. I could hardly believe this at first, but now it seems that it really is the case. If we are unhappy, worried, angry or irritable, it is our own delusion of self that has caused it. If we look clearly at what has made us miserable or angry or whatever, quite often it is something absurdly trivial that has pricked our oversensitive egos. If it is something that seems important, it is our delusion that makes us see it in the wrong perspective. Apparent disasters can be great opportunities, or blessings in disguise, and we can never foresee the consequences of events.

If, being worried or sad or angry, we cling on to it and don't just let it go, if we keep harping on our resentment or running round in circles of anxiety or indulging our misery, we are again being selfish. We often have some obscure idea that unhappiness is necessary, that if we have done something we regret we should make ourselves suffer for it, or that worrying about a problem will somehow help us to solve it. We may even think that we are only training when we are miserable, and that if we are happy it is because we are fooling ourselves about something or not training. We can delude ourselves that we are working through Our Problems, when often we're just being a pain in the neck. States of mind are very contagious, and our anxiety, misery or anger is bound to affect others.

This does not mean that these negative states should not arise. They are bound to arise; being human we are bound to feel worried or angry or miserable sometimes. But we do not have to feed these things, to give them an importance they don't have to have. We can let them come and go, neither pushing them away nor clinging on to them. It is the only way to find true unselfishness.

Sara Elbert

News and Events

Week Retreat: There will be a week retreat from the 17th to 23rd December.

The week of December 17th to 23rd is not a sesshin. It will be run simply as a retreat, an opportunity for lay students to join in regular activities at the Priory. There may be little or no more formal meditation than usual, there may be no lectures, there may be nothing special at all. If people have an idea that training is something different from ordinary daily life, or that meditation has to be something that is only done during a sesshin, or sesshins are strenuous and dependent on external discipline, then you should not come. If you have paid and want a refund let us know soon. If you want to come at some other time the schedule and activities will be much the same. The training is effective when we make a commitment to train at all times and in every activity. If it is only done on special occasions or for one or two weeks a year then you should not waste either our time or your time by coming in December.

The retreat is fully booked up unless somebody cancels. People who have not booked for this retreat, but want to make a short stay at the Priory and have been here before, are welcome to come up at another time.

Segaki: The Buddhist festival of feeding the hungry ghosts was held on October 31st to coincide with the western Hallowe'en or All Souls' Day. Nourishment is offered for all who have not fully realized their own spiritual potential. Approximately 60 guests came for the celebration. We all learned to sing the scriptures, offered the incense of our own training and enjoyed a tasty meal.

Founder's Day: The monks celebrated the Buddhist ceremony of gratitude for the founders of the temple on November 1st, which quite by accident corresponds to the western tradition of All Saints' Day.

Rev. Daiji Strathern: Daiji is enjoying his stay at Shasta Abbey after recovering from a difficult journey.

Improvements: We recently purchased a new carpet for the zendo which has vastly improved the comfort and warmth there. Unfortunately the purchase was made on a mistaken assumption that we had the funds for such luxury. Although the price was extremely reasonable there is a large quantity of carpet, and the treasurer's error was only discovered after the carpet was purchased. If anyone would like to make a contribution towards the cost of the carpet we would be most grateful. We also need a vacuum cleaner for the zendo.

The back room has been converted from storage to a lovely bedroom and study. And the kitchen is receiving some long overdue attention.

Lectures and Retreats: Rev. Daishin Morgan has given lectures in Manchester, Lancaster and Newcastle, and took a day retreat in Aberdeen on 7th November. Rev. Jimyo Krasner gave a lecture at Loughborough University.

Rev. Jisho Perry will be taking a day retreat in Birmingham the last weekend in January.

Animals: We have acquired a new goose called Matilda as a companion for Arthur the lonely widower. It was love at first squawk.

We also now have four goldfish, Gizmo, Gubbins, Doofer and Dooery.

Priory Sales: The following are on sale from the Priory: "Zen is Eternal Life", £3.25 (slightly damaged copies); "Selling Water by the River" in hardback, £2.00; "Zen Meditation" booklets, 80p.; "Becoming a Buddhist" booklets, 80p. (delivery may be delayed on both of these since our stocks need replenishing); "Bodhidharma" posters, hand printed on rice paper, 60p.; meditation benches, £3.50. All prices are post paid. Some items are slightly less if purchased at the Priory.



Kanzeon Bosatsu: A Japanese wall painting.



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